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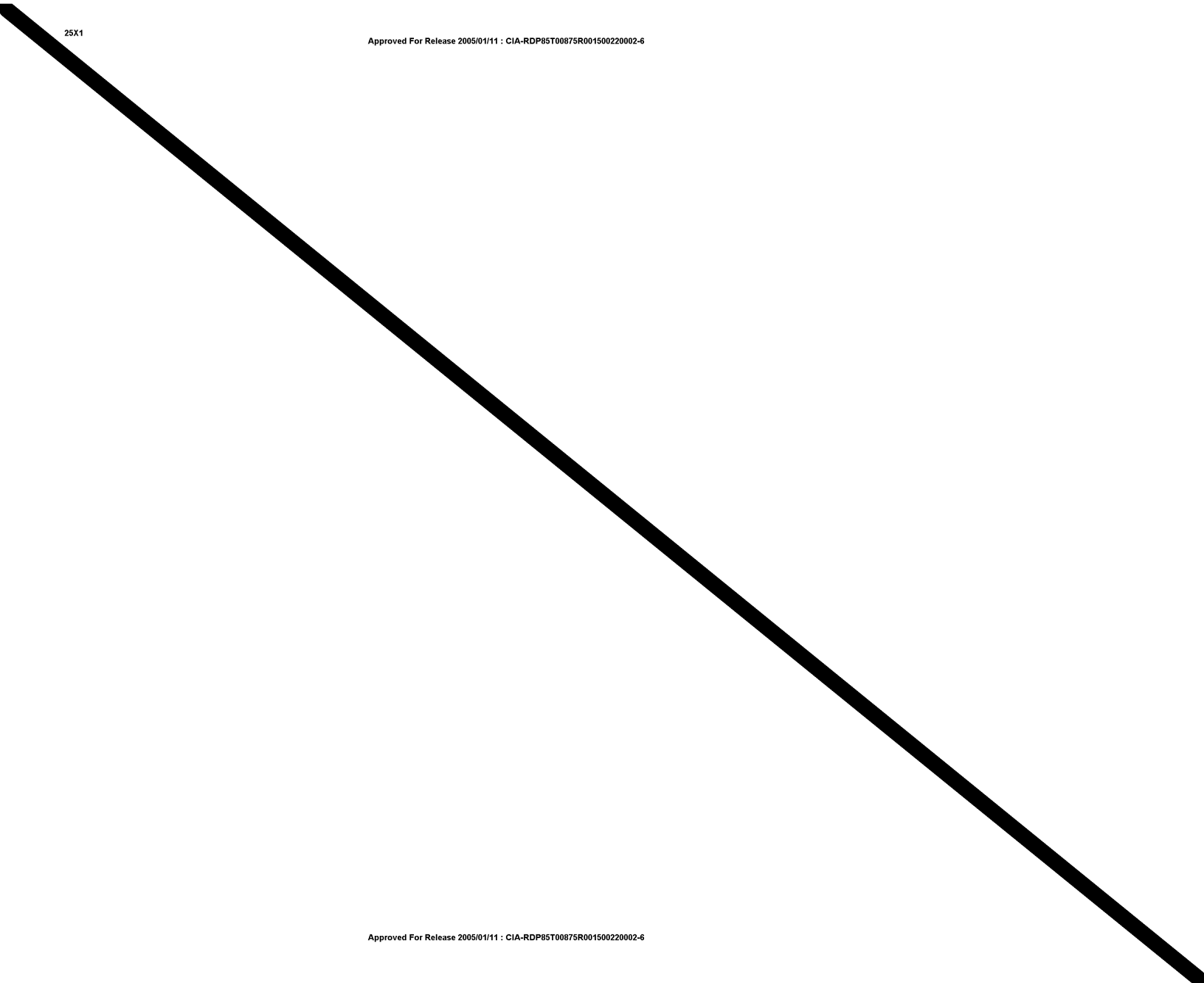

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

The Spread of Super-Powered Broadcasting Stations in the Arab World

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Spread of Super-Powered Broadcasting Stations in the Arab World

Summary

The planned installation of nine super-powered radiobroadcasting stations by seven Arab countries will increase the total power of Arab broadcast transmitters by about 75 percent. These new stations, costing between $1 million and $4 million each, probably will be completed by 1970. The regimes installing them apparently aim to upgrade both their domestic propaganda broadcasting potential and their ability to reach audiences in other Arab countries. Procurement of these super-powered transmitters foreshadows stiffer competition for the UAR, which is currently the dominant radio voice of the Arab world. The new Arab broadcasting stations will create serious radio interference problems throughout the Mediterranean basin.

Note: This memorandum was produced by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence; the estimates and conclusions represent the best judgment of the Directorate of Intelligence as of January 1968.

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Background

1. Radio is the most widespread means of mass communications in the Arab world, and Arab leaders are keenly aware of its importance and influence among their people. In the decade 1956-66 the number of radio receivers in the Arab states jumped from 2 million to more than 7 million and is still growing rapidly. Today, few Arab villages are without at least one communal radio receiver.

2. To reach international as well as domestic audiences, the Arab regimes have imported large numbers of high-powered transmitters, primarily from Western suppliers. Counting only stations of 50 kilowatts (kw) or higher, government-operated Arab transmitters in 1966 were capable of generating an aggregate of about 10.5 million watts of broadcasting power -- the equivalent of more than 200 transmitters the size of WTOP-CBS in Washington, D. C. The UAR alone accounted for about one-half of this total, and its international broadcasting effort of 870 hours per week was probably exceeded only by that of the USSR and Communist China. The UAR's heavy investment in broadcasting facilities is now being emulated by many other Arab states.

Proliferation of Super-Powered Broadcasting Stations

3. Seven Arab countries -- Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Syria -- either are now building or have contracted to build nine super-powered radiobroadcasting stations, ranging in transmitter size from 400 to 1,500 kw

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The nine facilities should be completed by 1970, and will add more than 8 million watts of power to the Arab broadcast transmission base.

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4. These new stations range in cost from about $1 million to $4 million, depending on size and location [redacted] 25X1

5. Arab countries are not alone in competing for radio audiences in the Middle East with super-powered broadcast stations. [redacted] 25X1

Expansion of the Propaganda War

6. On practical grounds, many Arab governments prefer to operate a comparatively small number of powerful facilities capable of wide coverage rather than a large number of low-powered regional or local stations. Fewer stations enable tighter control to be exerted over broadcasting and better use to be made of the limited number of trained personnel. Super-powered radiobroadcast stations also have assumed substantial importance in the Arab world as prestige symbols -- especially since the advent

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of Nasser's Radio Cairo. The primary motive for the construction of these stations, nevertheless, is the desire of the Arab regimes to expand their propaganda broadcasting potential.

7. The technical characteristics of most of these new transmitters -- having very high power and being designed for the MW, or standard broadcast, band -- point up the intent of the various regimes to blanket their domestic audiences as well as to reach the masses in other countries of the Middle East. Up to now, the bulk of Arab international broadcasting has been transmitted on shortwave (SW) facilities, capable of intercontinental distances. However, the growth of radio audiences in the Middle East has been based primarily on the increasing availability of inexpensive receivers, especially transistorized models, capable of MW reception but not SW. Seizing on this trend before its neighbors, the UAR installed two powerful MW broadcast stations a few years ago and has expanded its Arab world programing on this band to about 60 hours a day. Now other Arab states have begun to react to the UAR's lead.

8. Almost certainly the MW stations ordered by the monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya are intended as counterweights to the powerful MW transmitters already operating in the UAR and to those scheduled for installation in Iraq and Syria. Similarly, at the western end of the Mediterranean, the long-wave (LW) stations being acquired by Algeria and Morocco are likely to engage in an intense rivalry for listening audiences.*

Growth of the Radio Interference Problem

9. The new stations will add substantially to radio interference problems throughout the Middle East and probably in parts of Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. All of them will greatly exceed in transmitting power the limits recommended by the

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International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in the Copenhagen and African Plans (150 kw for MW and 200 kw for LW).* Although not all Arab countries concurred in these Plans, virtually all are signatories to the Montreux Telecommunication Convention of 1965, which specifies that "all stations, for whatever purpose, must be established and operated in such a manner as not to cause harmful interference to the radio services or communications" of other countries.

10. With transmitter powers ranging from 400 kw to more than a megawatt, these new stations can create harmful interference in their broadcast frequency for distances of up to 3,000 miles at night. Over shorter distances they also can cause interference in adjacent frequencies. Thus, their high power will further aggravate mutual interference problems caused by the overcrowding of the MW and LW broadcast bands. The near-saturation of the standard broadcast band is underscored by the fact that, as of May 1967, 524 stations were broadcasting on MW frequency channels assigned to 206 stations in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. As the UN agency charged with efficient management of the limited radio frequency spectrum, the ITU can only deplore the advent of these new super-powered broadcasting stations in the Middle East. It can do little else, however, because the international telecommunications conventions under which it operates provide no power of enforcement.

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* *The Copenhagen and African Plans are international accords which attempt to assign maximum transmitting powers and radio frequencies in such a way as to limit interference problems and to achieve more efficient use of the MW and LW broadcast bands.*

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